Friday
December 1, 2017

TODAY **73 / 51** Mostly sunny, cooler tonight

SATURDAY **75 / 57** Mostly sunny, a bit warmer

SUNDAY **73 / 64** 30% chance of patchy rain

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SPORTS, C1

DESHON ELLIOTT TO SKIP BOWL TO GO PRO

AUSTIN360

TIME TO SHINE

Meet the young dancers taking the stage in Ballet Austin's 'Nutcracker'

BUSINESS, B6

WORKFORCE DIVERSITY LAGS IN STATE'S TECH INDUSTRY

STATESMAN IN-DEPTH PARKS ACCESS

The staff of Balcones Canyonlands Preserve is retooling public access rules; now some climbers, motorcyclists and mountain bikers are worried they could be pushed out of spots such as Bull Creek District Park (seen here), Emma Long Metropolitan Park and the Barton Creek greenbelt. Preserve staffers say they're consolidating information already contained in a series of land management plans. JAY JANNER / AMERICAN-STATESMAN 2010

Climbers, cyclists worry about park access rules

Balcones Canyonlands Preserve staff: No intent to push anyone out.

By Pam LeBlanc
pleblanc@statesman.com

Head to New Wall on the Barton Creek greenbelt any warm afternoon and you'll find climbers inching their way up the 50-foot limestone escarpment, using rocks shaped like chicken heads, elephant ears and cookies for handholds.

Climbers have been scaling these grayish-green cliffs for decades, even after the city parkland was incorporated into the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve in 1996. But now, as the preserve's staff retools its public access rules, some climbers are worried that they could be pushed out.

They're not alone. Motorcyclists who ride designated trails at Emma Long Metropolitan Park, climbers who scramble up chunky boulders at Bull Creek District Park, mountain bikers who pedal through the Barton Creek greenbelt – all uses barred in most sections of the preserve, but permitted in areas that already operated as city parks when it was created – say that the reworded guidelines could squeeze them out eventually.

That's not the goal, according to staff members and the two voting members of the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Planning Organization Coordinating Committee, who say they're simply consolidating information already contained in a series of land management plans.

"The intent is not to change any grandfathered uses or close down any uses of those parks," said Sherri Kuhl, the Wildland Conservation Division manager at the city of Austin.

The coordinating committee will meet at 10 a.m. Friday at City Hall, 301 W. Second St., to discuss the issue, and many park users

Access continued on **A8**

TEXAS POLITICS

Barton drops re-election bid for House

North Texas Republican pressured after nude photo, sexting scandal.

By Maria Recio
American-Statesman special correspondent

U.S. Rep. Joe Barton, R-Ennis, says he is proud of his record in Congress.

WASHINGTON — Amid eroding support from constituents and GOP leaders after a nude photo and sexting scandal, U.S. Rep. Joe Barton, R-Ennis, announced Thursday he would not seek re-election.

"As a young congressman, my slogan was 'listening to you in Texas, working for you in Washington.' For me that was never just a saying, but a commitment – a way of life," Barton said in a statement. He was first elected in 1984.

"I am very proud of my public record and the many accomplishments of my office. It has been a tremendous honor to represent the 6th District of Texas for over three decades, but now it is time to step aside and let there be a new voice."

ALSO INSIDE
» Top Democrat in House calls for John Conyers to quit, **A10**

Barton, 68, had to make the decision quickly since the state filing deadline for the March primaries is Dec. 11.

He was pushed to retire by prominent North Texas officials, including state Sens. Konni Burton, R-Colleyville, and Brian Birdwell, R-Granbury, Tarrant County GOP Chairman Tim O'Hare and Ellis County GOP Chairman Randy Bellomy.

"We must hold public officials to a high standard and recent publicized incidents demonstrate those standards were not met," Burton said Wednesday. She threw her support behind Tarrant County

Barton continued on **A4**

TAX OVERHAUL

Key GOP holdouts give nod to tax bill

Last-minute support ends Senate Democrats' efforts to derail measure

By Marcy Gordon and Stephen Ohlemacher
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate Republican leaders wrangled with the last few GOP holdouts Thursday as they pushed toward passing the first major rewrite of the nation's tax code in more than three decades.

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said he expected a final vote late Thursday or early Friday on a $1.4 trillion package that would slash the corporate tax rate, offer more modest cuts for families and individuals and eliminate several popular deductions.

Lawmakers would then try to reconcile the Senate package with one passed by the House in the hope of delivering a major legislative accomplishment to President Donald Trump by Christmas. Republicans have cast passage of a tax overhaul as a political imperative to ensure they hold their House and Senate majorities in next year's midterm elections.

"We're heading down the homestretch," McConnell told reporters Thursday.

In a dramatic roll call that lasted an hour, the package cleared a procedural hurdle that threatened to derail the GOP's entire tax drive.

Democrats forced on a vote on whether to return the measure to the Senate Finance Committee so it could be rewritten to not make

Tax bill continued on **A8**

CONTINUING COVERAGE AUSTIN CITY MANAGER SEARCH

The final six: City manager candidates return to city for 2nd interview round

By Elizabeth Findell
efindell@statesman.com

Six finalists to be Austin's next city manager will make their way from five states and the District of Columbia this weekend to begin a second round of interviews.

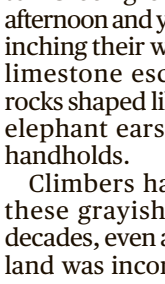
City leaders last week named six contenders for the job: Spencer Cronk, city administrator of Minneapolis; Cecil House, public housing construction leader for New York's Gilbane Building Co.; Scott Kubly, director of the Seattle Department of Transportation; Howard Lazarus, city administrator of Ann Arbor, Mich.; Denise Turner Roth, senior adviser for construction consulting firm WSP; and Maura Black Sullivan, chief operating officer for Chattanooga, Tenn.

ALSO INSIDE
» A closer look at the finalists, in six mini-biographies, **A11**

The person hired will assume day-to-day responsibility over all city departments and more than 17,000 employees – a role often designated to mayors in cities without a manager form of government. Austin is the fifth-largest city in the country to have a city manager serve as the city's executive, rather than having a strong mayor.

The finalists will meet Sunday in private interviews with City Council members in small groups and members of the council-appointed City Manager Search Advisory Task Force. Then, the council will narrow the list to an undetermined number who will

Manager continued on **A11**



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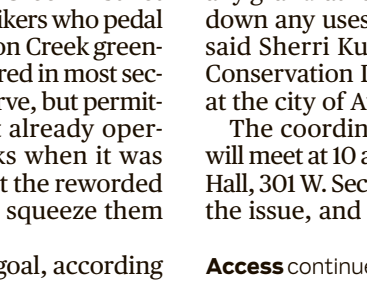

NATION & WORLD, A6

Sources: White House plans to oust Tillerson

Sources say secretary of state, often at odds with Trump, will be replaced by CIA director.

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